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No. 9

House of Representatives

The House met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska].

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 17, 1995.

I hereby designate the Honorable BILL BARRETT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 1995, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. BUNNING] for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BUNNING asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, last week, the owners of major league baseball visited Capitol Hill to urge Members of Congress to leave their exemption from the antitrust laws alone.

Many of you may also have seen a letter which went out last week from Acting Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig, which outlined a number of reasons that he felt vindicated the existence of the antitrust exemption.

I thought it was time that you heard the other side of the story.

Mr. Selig, in his letter, insisted that major league baseball does not operate as an economic cartel.

That is wrong. Major league baseball operates as a cartel in classic monopoly fashion. The owners, not market forces, dictate how the supply of its product will be allocated. The antitrust exemption shields major league baseball from market forces and makes competition impossible. That sounds like a monopoly to me.

Mr. Selig also insists that repeal of the antitrust exemption would not end the baseball strike. Wrong again. All signs point the other way. Don Fehr, the head of the Major League Baseball Players Association, has publicly stated many times that if the exemption were repealed, he would strongly urge the players to end the strike.

Mr. Selig insisted that the players should agree to a salary cap because it is good and because it has worked for football and basketball.

Wrong yet again. Football and basketball do have salary caps, but those caps were negotiated through the collective bargaining process. The baseball owners want to impose the cap unilaterally.

Baseball has a problem because the owners have been unable to reach agreement on how to share revenues between small market teams and large market teams.

But, instead of hammering out an agreement, they are now trying to arbitrarily impose a salary cap on the players to force the players to solve the owners' problem for them.

Mr. Selig said that the antitrust exemption has not hurt the players. That is as wrong as wrong can be. I know it is hard to feel sorry for baseball players with median salaries of half a mil-

lion dollars. And it is also true that the baseball players union has been very effective in the past several decades and has been able to win—through collective bargaining—some of the rights that other American workers have been guaranteed by law.

But the antitrust exemption does hurt players. It is a constant threat hanging over their heads. The owners know—that because of the exemption—that if they are able to break the union, the players have no place to turn.

Mr. Selig, in his letter, insisted that repealing the exemption would hurt baseball, fans, and communities that have franchises.

He is wrong again. The other major professional sports do not have an antitrust exemption but franchise movement has been slight.

After eight work stoppages in the last 24 years, and the current strike that has destroyed one season and threatens another, it is hard to imagine anyone suggesting that the antitrust exemption is good for the fans.

And then Mr. Selig dredged up the old trusty line that repealing and antitrust exemption would destroy the minor leagues.

This is a very effective line because minor league teams are scattered around the country and touch the lives and economies of small towns throughout the Nation.

But the plain truth of the matter is major league baseball has to have the minor leagues. It traditionally takes longer to develop professional baseball players than football or basketball players.

If the minor leagues were done away with, the decline in quality would be devastating to the integrity of the game and destroy baseball. The owners are smart enough not to jeopardize their investments in their teams by letting that happen.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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